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# Speeches Honoring Abraham Lincoln

Harry F. Lake

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A Little Humorous Incident in the  
Lincoln Story

An attempt to steal his dead body

H. D. Lake 2/12/39

(address to Rotary  
Club. Concord,  
N.H. 2/14/39)

## A Little Known Chapter in the Lincoln Story 2/23/39

One day in an August some years ago I spent  
some time with Henry Wells Page Custodian of the Lincoln  
Tomb in Springfield Ill at the point nearest  
where lies the body of President Lincoln. Standing  
there he asked me if I was familiar with the  
story of the attempt to steal his body in 1876  
I stated I had never heard of the matter & he  
replied that it was well worth knowing  
about. The suggestion of the offense which he  
mentioned was offensive in the extreme - as  
especially we had but a little while before come

From the so-called Memorial Hall. And that  
I had seen the evidences of the love & affection  
with which the memory of the Lincoln is sur-  
rounded. I had seen the floral tributes  
placed there as the offerings of American  
Tiger of France, Radereski, pramit & others  
man of Poland, Gen. Haller, Gen. Rushing, Lloyd  
George & President of the United States. While we  
were standing there a beautiful piece was  
brought in from the Rotary Club of Peoria  
Ill. No impression than all else I saw the lesser  
offerings - in terms of flowers - all about us - the  
tributes of the plain & humble people  
of America.

at such a time especially all thought of the  
desecration of the dead body of the President was  
sacrilege indeed. Since then I have <sup>un-  
der-</sup>taken to acquaint myself with the facts - and they are  
I am sure as I am about to tell them to you.

The background is a gang of counterfeiters &  
their desperate need of an expert engraver. In  
1876 & perhaps the year before a gang had been  
making fantastic profit by showing across the  
counters of Country Stores & purveyors for dollar bills.  
This was the gang of one Big Jim Kenealy - and the  
man who had made it possible for him to do so -  
for much of his money was one Ben Boyd -  
but at the time in question Ben Boyd was in  
the penitentiary. He was the expert engraver - and

the counterfeiter could not otherwise get along  
without the services of such assistance. Kenealy  
then snuffed about all the Cities & towns all the way  
from St Louis to Chicago in order to find somebody  
to take the place of Ben Boyd but none would  
be found. He then devised the quite possible  
act be it altogether bygone plan to steal the  
body of Lincoln from its resting place in Oak Ridge  
Cemetery on Springfield & then hold the same and  
finally to make a hard bargain with the Govern-  
ment & which bargain would include for the return  
of his body the pardon of Ben Boyd and the payment  
of a large sum of money. This plan was actually  
put into execution. In June 1876 Kenealy sent  
5 conspirators into Springfield Ill - ostensibly to conduct

a saloon business, ready to make arrangements 5  
& preparations for the theft of Liverpool's body one  
day however one the conspirators becoming one  
of the most devoted customers of his own  
place of business got badly intoxicated & brought  
out the company of a woman of the 'under  
world' & in her companionship revealed his  
& the other conspirators plans. These are that  
the eve of July 4th following when all the people  
would be engaged in the excitement of the  
celebration, the day following - speeches  
parades, picnics, ball noise & considerable  
drinking - the Counterfeit gang would go to the  
Liverpool Tomb break it open & steal the body  
bury it in a sand bar under a mud flat

extended across the Sangamon, and there  
refuse make terms with the government as to the  
proposed ransom and the return of the body.  
It was obviously the woman to whom this  
story was repeated was not a very estimable  
character but she apparently did not believe  
in stealing the corpse of Abraham Lincoln.  
She almost immediately called the story to the  
police of Springfield - and within a few hours  
to several other men acquaintances. In any  
event the story of the proposed trial soon be-  
came the common rather indefinite form, became the common  
story of the people of Springfield and before  
the police could act or perhaps could  
find out how to act. of an evening

the conspirator saloon keepers had that night  
to the rear of their place of business loaded thereon  
their stock on horse and went into the night.  
Jim Keenly was baffled and delayed but  
not defeated. He merely transferred the scene of his  
operations to his own saloon No 294 West Madison  
Street Chicago Illinois. Here he had a saloon in  
front a sort of club room in the gathering of shady  
characters in the rear - an ideal place for the  
hatching of illegal schemes by counterfeiters and  
others. Similarly over this bar in the front  
room stood a large bust of Abraham Lincoln.  
Here the new scheme was hatched that nearly  
succeeded. The time for the attempt was of the  
utmost importance & being carefully selected.

They choose election night Nov 1876 for  
the attempt. It was a shrewd choice a close  
election - and a better one - Democrats turning  
all the charges of the corruption in the two  
Grant administrations - & the Republicans  
pointing with pride to the party achievements of  
patriotism & <sup>war</sup> victory. Everybody would be up to  
a late hour to get the news of the election &  
everybody's mind would be on that matter. - &  
if any group of people saw, late at night  
any other group whatever might be their  
other more erratic action it would all be  
accepted as a part of the spirit & purpose of  
the day & the hour. After dark on this election

might the thieves went to the tomb & opened the iron door that lead into the sarcophagus removed the heavy marble slab that covered the same & took the coffin of President Lincoln about 1/3 out & away from its resting place. far enough to make sure of its entire disengagement from the sarcophagus - and yet its removal for complete removal & trans-shipment. When this had been done they ordered one Lewis Swegles who was with them & who had held the light to go and bring up the horses & <sup>the</sup> wagon into which the body was to be laid & carried by several swift running relays into the No. Indiana where in a place known to themselves the body was to be

buried in the sand dunes - where too they<sup>10</sup>  
knew the strong winds from the Great Lakes would  
with the shifting sands obscure every mark  
that would lead to the place. From this point  
we should now go back. Before the conspirators left  
Chicago they bought a London newspaper - tore a part  
of it away & put that portion into the hollow  
back of Lincoln standing over Kennebecs bar - & so  
they took the other portion with them - the idea  
being that when they left the boat they would  
also leave the remaining portion of the paper  
as then when they came to deal with the Gov.  
of Illinois for the ransom of the body - and  
the authenticity of the spokesman Kennebec

questioned he would produce that part 11 -  
from the Lincoln bank in Chicago and  
match it with the part left behind in the  
vault & which of course the detective would  
save & keep as a clue - and of course the  
authenticity of the agent & representative of the  
gang would be established. I have mentioned  
the name of Lewis Swegles, that he was not a  
criminal but he had been one - and was now re-  
formed. He had been engaged to ally himself with  
the counterfeiters - make himself one of them - paid  
out their secrets & report constantly to Robt  
Lincoln & to Maj. John T. Schiavelli who was  
Superior first law partner. On the information  
which Swegles furnished Agent Scott & Jones

men were dispatched to the tomb to  
await on Memorial Hall until they should  
get the signal from Siregles when to make  
them raid on the thieves. When therefore they  
ordered Siregles to bring up the horse & wagon  
for the purpose of carrying away the body -  
he, Siregles, who had no horse and wagon  
ran out of the tomb as this to get the horse  
& wagon but instead made his way about to  
Memorial Hall & executed the agreed upon  
signal. This signal was, to strike a match  
light a cigar and pronounce the one  
word "wash". This he did and the eight secret  
German men ran towards & into the burial room

and ordered the surrender of the thieves. His  
response being made light was produced  
& it was then found that the room  
was vacant. When Douglas had departed as  
understood for the house & wagon the thieves  
decided to await his coming back by going out  
doors from the stifling air of the house to  
smoke. While so doing and waiting for Douglas  
by the light of the rising moon they saw the  
figures of men descending upon the barn at  
noon. Heard the order to surrender &  
saw the making of the light. They rightly  
interpreted the meaning of all this and

at once made them get away. They were  
however arrested in Chicago Sunday, later and  
brought back to Springfield to answer for  
their offense. Now what was their crime? They  
Robt Lincoln, then thirty-two years old had married  
into the wealthy Pullman family of Chicago, and  
tried Caspale Rogers to assist in the punishment  
of the conspirators. In this he had the address of Mary  
Stewart. To their surprise they found however that  
the counterfeiters, being children of darkness, were wiser  
in their generation than were the children of light  
what was their astonishment to ascertain that no  
statute existed in Illinois that made a felony

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a crime out of the stealing of a human  
corpse. Finally they were indicted for  
conspiracy to take and carry away one  
coffin or casket of the value of twenty-five  
dollars the property of the National Burial  
Monument Association a corporation con-  
forming to the laws of Illinois against the statutes  
of said State and the peace and dignity of the  
people thereof. On this charge they were prosecuted  
and found guilty and because the jury had the  
right to fix the punishment they were thereafter  
sentenced to one year in the penitentiary - one  
day of which should be in solitary confinement.

In 1882 Mrs. Luerth died & was placed 15  
in death beside her husband. In 1887 the  
Caskets of both were opened and a Committee  
of Citizens made affidavit to their identity.  
& finally & for the last time in 1901 the  
Casket of Luerth was opened - and the  
body identified before placed finally  
beneath six feet of solid concrete and  
steel construction. As this last seen  
it was found that apparently the Luerth-  
Mers had done a wonderful piece of work.

the body was fully and easily recog-  
nizable and splendidly preserved  
His mortal eye will ever again  
see his body - He will live on  
only in the ~~gratified~~ memory of a  
gratified people - an admiring  
world.

H. F. L.  
Harry D. Lake

LINCOLN

-

HIS INTELLECTUAL POWER

Harry F. Lake

## LINCOLN - HIS INTELLECTUAL POWER

It is a thrilling experience to stand within the shadow of a great event. Impressively this thought came to me some time ago as I stood in the small room of the humble house where Abraham Lincoln died. Standing there I could easily believe the fact of the too narrow and too short bed on which his shambling limbs rested that last night, could experience something of the intense anxiety of the watchers by his bedside, which included all the members of his official family, save one, Secretary Seward who had himself been attacked and seriously wounded in what was intended as a horrible orgy of assassination, could feel something of the agony of Mrs. Lincoln and her son Robert in their frequent comings and goings from a small room adjoining, and finally could understand afresh and anew the meaning of the words of Mr. Stanton, the iron Secretary of War, who started to leave the room the moment after the President died, but abruptly turned back and standing exactly where I stood, broke the awful silence of the moment by saying, - "There lies the body of the greatest leader of men since the days of the Christ, and now he belongs to the ages".

Was Abraham Lincoln really a great man and does he actually belong to the ages?

I am told that in Glasgow, Scotland, as you come down what is known as Soldiers Hill you meet suddenly a heroic statue of Mr. Lincoln. It is a memorial to the soldiers lost out of the

Black Watch in the great war. Last year in the square off Westminster Abbey where they might have put the figure of any one of a large number of eminent English men there was dedicated in the presence of a most distinguished gathering of British statesmen the bronze likeness of President Lincoln. In any quarter of the globe, in any country where the yoke of bondage has not yet been entirely lifted, the children playing in the streets will tell that the greatest man of the centuries past is the American Emancipator. To the tomb of Lincoln in Springfield, Illinois, come each year more than 100,000 Americans to visit the resting place of the foremost citizen that their country has given to the world. They visit it as a shrine, and in that tomb are constantly kept the fresh floral tributes of the foremost leaders of the world. In mid-August some time ago I noted tributes from General Pershing, Calvin Coolidge, Paderewski, Lloyd George and Clemenceau, Tiger of France, together with, better than all, a mass of offerings from the plain and humble folk of America. This, two generations after his death!

In his natal month no magazine but tells some story of his remarkable career - no newspaper, worthy of the name, that does not honor itself by honoring him.

It is the sober fact that no man, purely human, since the beginning of the Christian era has in so universal a manner commanded the respect and stimulated the reverence of mankind as has Abraham Lincoln. Tell the story of his life to a group of American citizens today, speak on his character to High School boys and girls and that story may be told and will be received with the same attention, the same feeling and the same emotion as tho told

for the first time. The life story of Lincoln is as forever fresh as it is eternally impressive.

The glorious words of Edwin Markham then are something more than beautiful poetry,-

"And when he fell in whirlwind  
 he went down  
 As when a lordly cedar, green with  
 boughs,  
 Goes down with a great shout  
 upon the hills,  
 And leaves a lonesome place  
 against the sky."

Up from the log hut in the wilderness of Kentucky, out from the West, the plains and the savannahs of Illinois, America gave Lincoln to the world, and it is because he belongs today to the whole wide world that he likewise now belongs to the ages.

Was Lincoln actually a great man? Some little time ago Bruce Barton interviewed H. G. Wells, English author and historian, and asked him who the five greatest men of history were, and Mr. Wells replied that they were the Christ of Nazareth, Buddha, Aristototele, Roger Bacon and Abraham Lincoln.

Now the phases of Lincoln's character are so many - all attractive and impressive - that in a short address they cannot obviously all be discussed, or even mentioned. In view, therefore, of Mr. Wells' statement I would like to direct our thought to one phase of his being - his bald, naked, stark intellectual power. I would like to dwell for a little upon the contribution to his greatness made by the tremendous, irresistible power of his mind. Maybe we take it all for granted. In any event we do not often dwell upon it.

Now if I am correct in suggesting that Lincoln

was one of the outstanding intellectual powers of the nation it is all the more remarkable in view of the tragic shortcomings of his education which, so far as formal study is concerned, might all be encompassed within the space of a single ten months.

In support of my suggestion I would call to your mind a few of the public performances of Mr. Lincoln. We all know that the Republican Party was formed in 1856, and I don't blame anybody for being proud that Mr. Lincoln had a part in that great movement. Its organization was effected in Illinois at a meeting held in Bloomington May 29, 1856. To this organization meeting came delegates of those who had been members of the old Whig Party, then nearly dead, and from the Democrat party came those who were dissatisfied with the traditional position of that party on the question of slavery; likewise came many others from lesser important political groups and parties. It was, one can imagine, a great time for much talk. After many other speeches Lincoln was called upon and he addressed the gathering quite extemporaneously. Hardboiled newspaper men were there to report the proceedings, lawyers, judges and expert shorthand reporters. Lincoln spoke and after a few minutes the whole crowd stood up in their place, and as tho drawn to him by irresistible magnet packed the whole area about him. They stood on the chairs and settees, newspaper men and shorthand reporters, not knowing they had done it, threw down their pencils, all stood in a perfect abandon of fascination and listened to the end, and that day not an enduring scratch of a pen took down a word Mr. Lincoln said. Such was the overwhelming power, the tremendous effect of his logic and his oratory. This has gone down in history as Lincoln's lost

speech - never taken down or reproduced except as almost on a thousand occasions he reproduced in part its sentiments and arguments. Where in recorded history do you find a duplicate of this remarkable incident?

His debate with Douglas two years later is a story that is well known. Nobody but a man sure of himself could have issued that challenge and nobody but a giant, in mind, could have carried it on. Douglas was the greatest man of his time. For the ten years that followed the death of Webster, Clay and Calhoun Mr. Douglas occupied the center of the stage of American political life, and dominated that stage from that position. It was this sort of a man that the obscure frontier lawyer, with colossal nerve, challenged to the greatest political debate of all time. The printed records of the debates embody the story of seven set speeches, but the fact is that during that campaign Douglas made as many as 130 speeches and Lincoln made a like number. When Lincoln went into the debate he was hardly known outside of Illinois - at its conclusion he was known at every hearth side in America. Lincoln won the debate - Douglas won the election - but it may be fairly said that tho the world knows that Douglas spoke the world also knows what Lincoln said.

However, it was this series of speeches that made it possible for Lincoln to receive the invitation to speak in New York in 1860. It was intended that he should speak in the church of Henry Ward Beecher, but the matter gained in importance as time went on, and finally after a Sunday in attendance at Mr. Beecher's church the address planned on was delivered before a crowded house

at Cooper Union. For two hours, without a suggestion of the frontier lawyer and stump speaker of the West Mr. Lincoln, in the most exhaustive and thorough going and important speech that up to that time had been made on the subject of slavery, addressed the most critical audience that could have gathered in America. He captivated this audience, and such men as William H. Seward, Horace Greeley, Thurlow Weed and William Cullen Bryant, who presided. His preparation for this speech is interesting. Outside his own deep brooding and general reading he called to his assistance three books or papers, and they were the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States and Elliott's Debates on the Constitution.

After the speech these New Yorkers, perhaps remembering the hypnotic fascination that embraced the audience at the time of the Bloomington speech, and apparently feeling themselves to be well above that sort of thing, made up their minds to test this speech that this man from the West had made, and so a committee of scholars was formed to examine that address - to criticize it - to analyze it and to report upon its worth. This they did, and presently they reported, and among other things said that the speech was utterly incredible for the accuracy of its statements and for its wide range of knowledge. That address made him finally to be President of the United States, and was I think the intellectual apex of his life, and if anybody cares for my opinion I would say that the two greatest speeches ever made on American soil were the speech of Webster in reply to Hayne in the Senate of the United States January 26, 1830, and that of Abraham Lincoln in New York February 27, 1860.

In a little over one year from this time Lincoln spoke his first inaugural to the nation. I wish to repeat one comment made upon it. Many had assumed that Mr. Seward, chosen to be Secretary of State, would write that address, but just as it was concluded, Jeremiah S. Black of brilliant mental endowment who was, first, Attorney General, and then Secretary of State in Buchanan's cabinet, who furnished nearly all the brains as well as most of the badness of that administration, who had himself believed this story of Seward's writing the inaugural, and held Lincoln in deep contempt, suddenly burst upon a company of his boon companions and said "Gentlemen we have greatly under estimated this man from Illinois. Mr. Seward did not write that speech, only one man in America could write that speech and that is Mr. Lincoln himself. Gentlemen we shall soon find out that he is the brainiest man in this country."

Again it is interesting to know the material Lincoln had at hand in the preparation of this marvellous address. This material consisted according to William H. Herndon, Lincoln's law partner, of whom Lincoln asked that he procure them - the Constitution, Clay's speeches on the Compromise of 1850, and Jackson's Proclamation against Nullification, and later on Webster's answer to Hayne delivered in the Senate of the United States.

I suppose that volumes almost have been written of the Gettysburg speech, - all the way from those who prove that it was casually written upon the back of an envelope while on the way from Washington to Gettysburg, to those who say that over a period

of time it was composed and written with meticulous care. I think it was carefully written and then revised the night before its delivery. Now there is one thing that is unique about this address, and that is the kind and character of the speech itself. Other men improve their technique by practice. A minister preaches from time to time - his mind goes along the same way. The effort and the effect toward the same end is cumulative. He improves himself until he becomes impressive. A lawyer may make many addresses to the court or jury - does it constantly and finally with tremendous effect, until it may be said of one as Samuel McCall said of Webster that his address to the jury in the White murder case in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1830 was the greatest speech ever delivered to a jury in the history of the world. Now there is a certain sameness of motive about the sermon of the minister and the address of the lawyer. They each proceed in a general way along the same track - practice makes perfect. But the unique thing in the Gettysburg address is that while Lincoln made literally hundreds of addresses before, he never made one like this.

Many of his political speeches are a matter of record, some of his state papers are preserved in the pride and memory of his country men; whoever has been in a court room can imagine the nature of his addresses to the jury. Not long before his election to the Presidency Lincoln sought to repair his broken fortunes by entering the lecture field, but the attempt was a failure. As an eulogist he was not impressive. At an early age he was asked to speak at the funeral of Bowling Green, his old friend, but soon he broke down and in confusion left the room. In mature age he

delivered an eulogy to the memory of Henry Clay - his hero. It was not important. He had done nothing before in his life like the Gettysburg speech. Great as it is it stands as the product of his mind utterly alone.

If you would know what the mind alone can do and what it is read the speech of Edward Everett delivered at the same time. Now Edward Everett was sixty-nine years old at the time, had been minister to England, Governor of Massachusetts, United States Senator, Secretary of State, and President of Harvard College, and was without a peer the greatest orator in America. His speech at Gettysburg was a great address, the result of a lifetime of ripe, rich scholarship, and two months intense application to the subject at hand, - the greatest effort of his life. It was a wonderful speech, of faultless diction, of lofty sentiments, perfect reasoning, two hours and more long, cold as ice, and now, if you search, to be found in libraries. Read then that speech of Lincoln, ten sentences, two hundred and fifty-eight words. It is like the benediction after prayer. There is the giant mind and the swelling heart. No wonder the University of London adopted it as the one purest specimen of English spoken on this side of the Atlantic. The speech of Everett, product of the brain alone, is forgotten; the address of Lincoln, child of mind and heart, will live till language is no more spoken - till all lips are dust.

No combination of ten sentences in any language, outside of holy scripture and certain state papers, have so captured the thought and stirred the emotions of men. May it not be that in the coming times when men have developed spiritually beyond us

as much as we, so we think, have grown beyond the tribes of three thousand years ago, they will gather together for a revised Book the inspired writings of their past, and in that book without shock to any will be found this great utterance as the substitute, better by far than several, of any one of a large number of the Psalms, or as the fitting conclusion to the letters of Paul.

I have suggested that Lincoln made this speech as the only one of the kind. Where did he get this speech? As well ask where did Shakespeare and Michael Angelo get their genius; where did Handel and Mozart and Beethoven get their music - who inspired the hand that touched the lyre of the Scottish ploughman and upstayed the life of the German priest and sent his message true to its mark? Lincoln got the Gettysburg speech, as with the prophetic spirit of Isaiah or Amos he snatched it out of the Infinite to remain forever a living sapphire among the gems of the world's great literature.

As bearing upon Lincoln's intellectual power something should be said of his position in the profession and practice of law which was his vocation. I always knew Lincoln was a great lawyer. Now what is the beginning and what the end of this story. The beginning of Lincoln's legal education is strange indeed. Up the little hill in front of the Lincoln-Berry store in New Salem one day an immigrant to the West drove his pair of tired horses thru the mud. Discouraged as he was he offered his heaviest barrel on the wagon for fifty cents. Lincoln paid the last money he had for it, and one day spilled the contents out on his store floor, and there emerged to his sight the four volumes making up the full

Commentaries on the Common Law of William Blackstone. Out in front of the frontier store stretched out at full length with the book extended in his arms, which rested on the ground, Lincoln learned his law. One day Jack Kelso, the village loafer, came along and said "what doing Abe", and Lincoln said "studying", and Kelso pursued the matter and again asked "studying what Abe", and the reply was "studying law", and Kelso said "Good God Almighty" and walked on. I one day ate a picnic lunch there and I confess to a deepening of the emotions to know that I was exactly where Lincoln had read his Burns, learned the philosophy of William Shakespeare, and studied the Commentaries of William Blackstone.

Less than one year, tho after this conversation with Jack Kelso, Lincoln went forth from New Salem to become the junior law partner with John T. Stuart, leading attorney of Springfield and that part of Illinois. He remained with Stuart a few years and then became partner with Stephen T. Logan of whom Judge David Davis, a member of the United States Supreme Court, said that he was the ablest lawyer he had ever met either in the Court room or before the bar. This then was the education,-- the books of Blackstone, a few years with Stuart, and a few with Logan -- and what is the final result in the field of Law? Only a little while ago Lord Shaw, great English authority, told the American Woman's Club of London that the five greatest lawyers of all time were Propriniatus, Grotius, Lord Mansfield, Forbes-Duncan and Abraham Lincoln.

I can hardly follow the judgment of Lord Shaw. I don't think that Lincoln is one of the five greatest English speaking

lawyers, nor one of the five greatest in American history, nor one of the five greatest of his own time. One knows, of course, that Lincoln was on the one side or the other in a large number of the most important law suits of his day in and about the range of his activities. One day at our State Library I counted the cases in Illinois that went before the Illinois Supreme Court, and from the third Illinois Report where his name first appears to the twenty-fifth Report in which his name appears for the last time, it is evident that Lincoln was in 176 cases taken to the Supreme Court. When you consider how the twenty-two years of his law practice was interrupted by many events and activities, and further that Illinois was a frontier state in which two dollars were still offered for the scalp of every wolf, and fifty dollars for the scalp of every Indian, one can understand what a monumental task this record means. Especially so if you add the further consideration that in all these cases Lincoln argued them before the court not from precedents, but from fundamental principals each on its own merits.

The great accomplishment of Lincoln as a lawyer was not however either in the courts or before the jury. It was as President of the United States. He was not only President but he was the Commander-in-Chief of both the Army and Navy. In him united first military and first civil authority.

In the rebellion of sovereign states against other sovereign states, in that indissoluble union in which they all were held by a Constitution that bound them all,- in the midst of a fratricidal war, the most important of its kind since the

world began, and utterly new in method, since it was the first war of importance where transportation was by means of railroads, and communications by means of telegraph, Mr. Lincoln, without precedent to guide him, without much help, and certainly without much advice, seized upon that War Power vested in him as Chief Executive and as Commander in Chief under our written Constitution, performed a thousand acts which were purely war measures, organized civil administrations in the rebellious states, and chose every day what measures were necessary and what were permissible to crush the rebellion, and still preserve us a nation.

Even he on his throne of authority was limited by the express or implied powers granted in the Constitution, - our Supreme Law of the land. Now if Lincoln has any claim to being one of the great lawyers of all time it is this, - that for all his acts during a four year war period for which acts there was generally no precedent whatever, no single court of competent jurisdiction has ever declared one of them to be invalid, beyond his authority, or outside the Constitution of his country. There, gentlemen, there stands the lawyer!

May I recite an incident related to me by an aged man once the office boy of Abraham Lincoln? Henry B. Rankin came into the office of Lincoln and Herndon in 1856. He was then a young boy, the son of the sheriff of Minard County, whose father excused him from school during the session of the court to run errands for the judge, the jurors, or other court attaches. As a lad he saw much of Lincoln in the courts and on the stump,

and was with him in his office the last four years before Lincoln went to Washington. He told me this story one hot August afternoon. In 1856 Mr. Lincoln came from Springfield where he was engaged in the practice of law to speak in Petersburg, some thirty miles to the northwest, in behalf of John C. Fremont and the other Republican candidates in the campaign of 1856. That particular section of Illinois was no fair field for the Republican party. It was almost entirely Democratic or Know Nothing, and I realize that many in this audience would say there is small difference between the two, and on this occasion some 1500 people met Lincoln in fixed determination that he should not speak.

Mr. Lincoln with two friends as body guard ascended the rude platform and attempted to begin his address. He was immediately howled down, and such was the result of several more attempts to begin his speech. Finally at the end of three-quarters of an hour the will of Lincoln prevailed and then for over two hours he addressed that crowd on the issues of the campaign which were in turn the issues of American slavery. That was the story and I came away from Mr. Rankin baffled in my mind - questioning how it was possible that the will of one man could beat down the will of 1500 people determined that he should not speak. And then I remembered that Ulysses S. Grant, after he was President of the United States, made a trip around the world and when he returned he made the statement that he had met the great leaders of the world of that day - Gambetta of Italy - Li Hung Chang of China - Bismarck of Germany, and Gladstone of England, but that the greatest intellectual power he had ever encountered was in the person of Abraham Lincoln. Here then was the answer to all my questioning.

Great moral force and tremendous intellectual power had met in Mr. Lincoln and they are a combination everywhere, at all times forever unbeatable.

In the lovely city of Decatur, Illinois, there have been two copper plates erected by loyal citizens, that tell a story of tremendous dramatic effect. One copper plate is in Lincoln Square, and it recites in effect that by that locality in 1830 passed Abraham Lincoln and his party on their way from southwestern Indiana to their first log home in Illinois still to be erected,- Abraham Lincoln poor, obscure, friendless, illiterate, and of no more importance than a bit of driftwood on the waters of the Sangamon to which they were going.

Now within a stones throw of that locality on the wall of the Milliken Bank Building is another copper plate and that recites that on that locality in a wigwam erected for the purposes of the Illinois State Republican Convention on May 10, 1860, the name of Abraham Lincoln was first mentioned for the Presidency of the United States. This convention was the mad scene of men determined to force the political fortunes of a friend. Only thirty years stretch between the two events depicted by the legends of the copper plates. From a name unknown to the successful placing of that name to the most important and powerful position known among the tribes of men! So wonderful may be the accomplishments of a single life in the hands of one entirely great.

Eight days later in another wigwam erected for the purposes of the National Republican Convention in Chicago he was formally nominated to the Presidency of his country, - and so began the last phase of his remarkable career which lead to Washington

and Ford's Theatre and at last to a deathless name and fame.

There is one phase of Lincoln's character that to me is important, and that is his apparent loneliness,- that crust of reserve and reticence that could not be broken thru. The most companionable of men there were times of loneliness nearly every day, and sometimes days at a time, that no friendship could share. He was a man apart - and this has been the experience of every great man. Great souls are generally grown in solitude.

It was in the Black Hills of Dakota that Roosevelt developed that peculiar fibre that made him a leader. On that dilapidated piazza of his homestead in the heart of the Adirondacks old John Brown used to stand in the solitary presence of Mounts Marcy and Whiteface and all those other giants of the Sawtooth Range and there learned to be the man to clash with American slavery. The wide expanding plains and savannahs of Illinois brooded over the wistful but growing spirit of Mr. Lincoln until there he made that moral and mental growth that caused him to be the wonder of his age. These periods of quietness, of loneliness, of introspection, of self examination, of dark brooding, of deep thinking, were the periods in which he grew his soul, strengthened his moral fibre, developed his mind, became large in every aspect of his nature, and finally to be eternally unafraid.

If chosen souls could never be alone  
 In deep mid silence open doored to God  
 No great thing ever had been dreamed or done.  
 The nurse of full grown souls is solitude.

Perhaps it was by the processes of pure drudgery and the unspectacular that he did his greatest service to the world. He came to his position of power by a minority vote of the American people, and without army, navy, money or munitions stepped into the most stupendous, most thoroughly equipped and deeply planned rebellion of all history. Traitors were in every department and disloyalty the rule. He spoke to the North and two millions of armed men sprang to his defense. He appealed to the sea and the mightiest navy of all time to that date crowned every wave. He sternly turned to Wall Street and money and munitions came forth abundantly. Without military training he became at the end of the war the superior of all commanders of both armies, except for Grant in the matter of military strategy.

As a statesman he justified his measures by their success. As a philanthropist he gave liberty to one race and insured freedom to another. Thru it all not one act of cruelty engaged his hand - not one single proscriptive word or phrase passed his lips - and at last out growing the pure rationalism of youth and sobered by the tremendous responsibilities of his place of authority, weak and in need as in the midst of his strength he felt himself to be, he bowed from the summit of human power low before the Cross of Calvary and became a Christian.

I do not know that I have proved my thesis that Lincoln was one of the first few intellectual powers of our nation. I don't know that it has to be proved. Perhaps it is assumed, but it is well to call it to our minds specifically.

It would be pleasant to dwell upon his spirit of kindness at such a time as this, but the whole world already knows that beautiful story, or upon the humbleness of his birth which has already I think been greatly over done, or upon his political sagacity, but a single biography will reveal all that, or upon his magnanimity of spirit and conduct, for it was the certain program of a life time. Let us give all these elements their full share in the making of the soul that he was. Add to them the tremendous overpowering, irresistible force of his moral integrity - and then to them all add again the stark, naked, bare, intellectual force and power of his mind, and at last we come to understand why he was what he actually was - the greatest of all the world's citizens since the days of Paul.

Harry F. Lake



